

WHEN an educational institution created to provide a truly public education for all defaults on this obligation, then it becomes the educator's duty to challenge the oppressive structure of the privatized university on a daily basis in order to rebuild the institution anew.

Let it be known:

California's Master Plan for an inclusive and equitable education has failed. As the majority of American families have fought to survive in harsh economic conditions, the University of California Regents and their super-wealthy donors have made themselves even richer at our expense. They have gambled our hard-earned money, patented our discoveries, and put the corporate interests above the needs of local communities. They have perpetuated a myth of market freedom that hides the realities of white supremacy, elitism, patriarchy, heteronormativity, and imperialism. They have set the parameters of achievement around their corporate investments. They have turned knowledge into a commodity unavailable to working class communities and communities of color.

They have privatized our future.

For too long, they have dictated the pace of the university. They have set it to the mindless beat of the stock ticker. In the quarter system, our students are swept down a predetermined path, where they are bombarded by rapid bursts of information. The swift, uncompromising pace pressures educators to keep moving through the material rather than allowing students to pause and reflect critically either on the material itself or on its relevance to their daily lives. At the end of the quarter, we quantify student achievement within a rigid framework that privileges certain types of knowledge and promotes a type of shortsighted, goal-driven individualism that undermines collective work and meaningful forms of community. The quantifiable results are sent to administrators who evaluate our success and our students' achievement in mindless terms. They see neither the time nor the space for critical work. In this system it is best, for students and teachers, to move forward without asking questions.

We, a growing number of young educators at UCSD, refuse to remain complicit in this system. Our real work has been stalled and dulled down by their elitist parameters. At times, we despise ourselves for our complicity. At times, we feel ignorance would be an easier position. What remains consistent: the system feeds on our time, energy, and labor. It traps us in an oppressive logic, which we often come to accept as the natural order. In this way, it cuts off the possibility of strategic resistance.

On a daily basis, we feel the weight of this system. Our families and communities feel it. Yet, we continue to connect and fight and dream. Indeed, our dreams are born out of struggle. They are born from lived experiences, remembered stories, and unspeakable histories of trauma and loss. Our dreams are spoken from the margins, from the silences, from the shadows of history, but they have the capacity to shake the very foundations of power in the UC.

So with joy, we affirm our most important dream: **ANOTHER UNIVERSITY IS POSSIBLE!**

A liberatory UC, run by and for all the people, is not only possible—it is a critical part of a planetary youth movement that is enacting true democracy in public squares and parks. We have faith that the weapons at our disposal will allow us to play our part. We have faith that these weapons will allow us to peacefully tear down the old edifice and build this new university from the ground up. Our pedagogy is our main weapon, and on a daily basis, we see that it is neither blunt nor ineffective.

These are our main pedagogical principles—intuitions more than ideologies, bonds more than guidelines, dreams rather than demands. These principles aim at cracking through the crumbling structure of the university at its base. Through these principles, we will take part in a guerilla campaign to bring all of the people back into the university:

1. Our pedagogy is devised by and for the youth. Though we invite established scholars to join our movement, we have come to see that the central push for radical change must come from those at the bottom of the academic hierarchy. Our struggle cannot and will not be won by esteemed scholars or respectable educators; it will be won by the underpaid TA and the overworked adjunct faculty member. Side by side with our students, our struggle will be fought in the streets and in the classroom, in marches and in lecture. Together, we will fight to reclaim the university on our terms. Our word will be written on the board, stenciled on the public wall, articulated in the classroom and voiced on the street.

2. Our pedagogy does not recognize the degree or credential as the mark of the critical educator. To be a critical educator one does not need to have a degree, credential, or ladder-rank faculty position. We acknowledge that activist undergraduate students, labor organizers, community leaders, and artists are critical teachers. In most cases we find ourselves being taught and led by them. The words, family histories, and knowledge that they bring into our lives have become intertwined with our own. We hope to continue to move together. We hope to create this pedagogy together. Ours is a pedagogy from below, rooted in and fed by the real lives and real experiences of those we teach.

3. Our pedagogy is a real world pedagogy. Although corporate educators often claim that their classes are dedicated to “real world problems,” their teachings operate within a fantasy world that ignores the very concrete conditions and structural obstacles that their students and alumni navigate on a daily basis. Our pedagogy recognizes the contradictions and inequalities that organize our society in the present. Instead of ignoring these contradictions and naively hoping that they will magically disappear, we teach students to read the world as it truly is so that we can help to prepare them to operate within it. Our teaching responds to where we are, not where our society wants us to be.

4. Our pedagogy resists educational models that reward individualism, elitism, and selfishness. We recognize that such educational models undermine the possibilities for collective organizing and resistance by teaching students to think in terms of short-term, material objectives—the A, the corporate internship, the resume. The mass-production of debt-laden graduates who think in these terms serves corporate interests at the expense of the public good. To counter this corporate system of indenture, we introduce learning strategies that place the community over the individual, the relational above the singular, qualitative understandings over flat measurement, and collective participation over self-serving achievement. At times these methods will be cast as un-American, yet we believe that our lessons are guided by the most fundamental democratic principles: freedom, equality, and consensual participation.

5. We refuse to teach history in un-critical ways. We offer students complex views of history. We question historical viewpoints that buy into the past as proof that individualism, market freedom, and unfettered capitalism have led us down a straight path of progress. To reveal the contradictions of our country’s past, we focus on histories from the margins, on people who struggled to be recognized as human in inhuman political conditions. We teach these histories not as a multicultural novelty, but as the crucial bedrock of our history and as a prelude to our present. Because we are complicating the Disney narrative of history, students may come to see historical figures like JFK, Ronald Reagan and the so-called “Founding Fathers” in very different ways. These figures were real men with real flaws and, as such, they made real mistakes that impacted real people. We are educators, not cheerleaders for nationalism. Our job is not to indoctrinate students to blindly believe a fantasy version of our nation’s history. Our job is to teach students to understand our country’s past so that they can build a better future.

6. Our pedagogy will not constrain itself to one discipline. Departmental and disciplinary boundaries limit the scope of our work, fragment us, and discourage critical educators from finding allies across disciplines. In opposition to this divisive institutional framework, we pledge to share our disciplinary knowledge as a way of creating an intellectual environment that genuinely promotes an active, innovative engagement with concrete, real-world problems. Critical educators from the humanities will collaborate with critical scientists to critique racial and gender biases in the natural and hard sciences. Together, we will give all of our students the tools for questioning, articulating, and responding to oppressive structures in their future careers. We will also ensure that scientific research in the UC system will no longer be a commodity for the university and its corporate and military interest groups. We will struggle, hand in hand, to transform scientific research into a public good rather than a corporate commodity.

7. Our classrooms will be open and accessible to all. Financial barriers systematically deny working-class students, members of the staff, and students of color access to the intellectual resources of the university. Until the administration formally adopts policies that will secure equal access to a university education for all Californians, we refuse to recognize their authority to police access to our classrooms. Our labor as educators produces the education sold by the university, and we assert our right to set the terms and conditions of that production. This is not negotiable.

8. We will not operate on definitions of normalcy and ability that are privileged in the current university. Ours is a queer pedagogy. Ours is a pedagogy of various and differential abilities. Our goals and methods center on community rather than an individual body’s ability to achieve within normative and normalizing settings.

9. Our pedagogy centers on dialogue. Our pedagogy is not a method of indoctrination. We do not seek to impose knowledge on our students. It is political only in the sense that it encourages our students to participate in the struggle for a democratic education and democratic society. Our pedagogy revolves around community, knowledge sharing, and active listening. Through discussions with our students, we hope to teach and learn new ways of navigating the system, critiquing it, and coming up with collaborative and creative solutions to social problems. These dialogues bring into being communities that resist the oppressive corporate logic of the academy. They open up new horizons beyond a purely financial future. We realize that dialogues (unlike the easy answer delivered as a monologue) will not always be popular from the perspective of some students, peers, or directors. We are not so concerned with getting positive feedback on evaluations, since those markers of achievement often perpetuate a consumer model of learning. We have other markers of success that cannot be measured here and now.

10. We believe that our critical practices will create a necessary degree of tension in all of our students, even the most indoctrinated. We realize that our classroom conversations will make some students—and even many faculty members and co-workers—uncomfortable. We anticipate this tension because our knowledge lacks the full support of the elite who have turned the university into a business that prioritizes individual success and knowledge-hoarding above collective coexistence

and knowledge sharing. This tension is a good sign—a sign that we are doing something right in a corrupt setting. Although inspiring tension is not a goal in and of itself, it is a necessary step. This tension, which may inspire visceral reactions and backlash, is the first step toward a genuine liberation from oppressive ideologies. Our students' and peers' vexed reactions to critical practices, even if hostile, equate to a recognition of that which has previously gone unacknowledged in their field of vision. In these moments of tension, they begin to see other worlds and other words. They begin to perceive alternative ways of being in community as well as radical ways of seeing themselves as a product of collective historical struggles. Like adapting to a new prescription lens, the viewer needs time. We will encourage them to acknowledge this tension as a normal stage in coming into critical consciousness. We will come up with exercises and assignments that let them discover how deep this new lens allows them to see.

11. Our pedagogy decentralizes corporate authority in the classroom and re-centers the learning community. Older critical pedagogies disrupted educational models that privileged top-down structures within which the teacher was privileged as the single source of legitimate knowledge. We find that corporate interest, even more than the authority of the teacher, has become the central locus of power in our classrooms. Though we try to de-center our classrooms (while balancing our own social position within gender, racial, class and sexual hierarchies) an invisible pressure from above and beyond remains. The students stare past the teacher, focusing on standardized rules of success that allow them to consume the most knowledge in the shortest amount of time for the greatest quantifiable “return on investment.” The older banking model of education, discussed by critical educators, has evolved into a corporate investment model—our students are taught to see themselves as empty vessels to be filled up with mindless corporate strategies rather than knowledge. This investment model naturalizes and reproduces social, economic and political hierarchies by socializing students to accept their role as consuming subjects. It also socializes teachers to accept their role as bondsmen to the elites. Our pedagogy seeks to re-imagine the classroom as a space within which students can contest this investment model. We will open up spaces of knowledge sharing in which teachers and students reclaim their authority in collective terms. In our classrooms, students and teachers will meet in a space where they attempt to slow down time, open up a space of critique, and begin to consider deeper forms of investment in each other and in their dreams.

12. We believe in all of our students and place blame where blame is due. As bondsmen to the elite, we found ourselves displacing our frustrations in the most outrageous ways: We distrusted our students and blamed them for not understanding the critical terms. We became frustrated and angry when student responses kept reproducing the oppressive terms that neoliberal culture impressed upon them. We reacted by re-centering our authority in ways that parodied the disciplinarian and punitive models of the past. We have come to see that these reactions are misdirected. It is necessary to place blame where it is really due: not on the students but on the elites who have created and reinforced a corrupt educational system. They have created conditions that make it nearly impossible to understand the critical lexicon we have inherited from previous generations of critical educators and scholars. Over the past four decades, the elite have sought to consolidate their political, social, and ideological power by reinforcing a reactionary, patriarchal, white supremacist normative order that marks our critical thought as un-American or a relic of the past. By bombarding society with the idea that people working in academia are elitist and “out of touch,” the elite (through the vast network of corporate media that they own and control) have built up walls around many of our students. Our job is to tear down these walls without tearing down our students. Many young teachers believe they can go on with their own research, work with the students who “get it,” and disregard the others. This is a fallacy. An isolationist approach will do little to challenge the established educational order, and this failure will critically undermine the possibilities for both our students' and our futures: there will be no space for our research and fewer opportunities for the next generation of scholars, educators, and activists in the workplace. Instead of writing off the students who need our help most, we will recognize, critique, and disrupt the system that shapes all of our students. We will share novel tactics that challenge their assumptions and allow students to imagine a different, more liberatory future. We ask our fellow teachers to see where the blame is really due—not on the foot soldiers within the 99% but on the 1% that has led our students to think and act destructively.

13. Our pedagogy rejects and resists the militarization of universities and the incarceration of communities of color. The university-prison-military complex has established material conditions and educational standards that steer communities of color and working class communities into the prison or army. This is not a fantasy. It is a statistical reality. As communities of color are criminalized and subjected to state discipline, the State simultaneously defunds the educational and social programs that open up alternative possibilities for members of these communities. Even when students from these communities manage to make it to the university, the administration systematically underfunds and closes the programs most relevant to their lives and their continuing struggle—those that emphasize social justice and critical studies of history and culture. At the same time, the corporatized UC is intimately tied to the military industrial complex. We see this in the militarization of knowledge itself: The military, and corporations with military ties, fund anthropological and scientific research that is used as a weapon of warfare. We will counter this system in real ways: We will expose the carceral and military logic to our students. We will teach them to look at the hard data with critical eyes. We will extend our knowledge to the prison abolition movement and align ourselves with high school, elementary, and special education teachers who fight a daily battle to open up alternative paths for their students. We will teach in prisons and learn from prisoners. We will protest so-called “policy centers” and institutes that claim to produce scholarly research for the purpose of advancing U.S. interests,

while actually advocating neocolonial policies that benefit their corporate benefactors at the expense of marginalized communities. Researchers in these institutions amount to little more than intellectual mercenaries, and we will hold them publicly accountable for the violence they legitimize. In the most immediate sense, we will stand side by side with our students in peaceful protest to ensure that militarized police forces no longer get away with indiscriminate acts of violence on campus and in our communities. Through word and deed, we will ensure that this broken system cannot reproduce itself.

14. We recognize the crucial necessity of Ethnic Studies, Critical Race, and Critical Gender programs. Knowing the Chicano movement means knowing U.S. history. Knowing Stonewall means knowing U.S. history. Knowing the struggles of women of color and queers of color means knowing U.S. history. These struggles are a vital part of the education system at all levels, yet they face an immediate challenge: Over the last three years, critical programs have come under attack from entrenched white supremacists and wealthy elites who want to maintain their place at the top of a social and economic hierarchy. This backlash is the last stand of the 1% in a state where much of the 99% happens to be Chicana/o, Latina/o or Mexican-American. The ban on ethnic studies programs in Arizona is a blatant example of a privileged few manipulating the legal system to retain their control. As such, it is an attack on everyone fighting for justice and equality across the nation. It is an attack on our collective history. Thus, we refuse to acknowledge the legality of this oppressive law. The ban is a flagrant display of white supremacy, class warfare, and a war against all of Arizona's youth. We see our struggle to reclaim the public university reflected in the struggle of Raza Studies students and teachers fighting to preserve an educational program that advances the needs of their communities in clear and measurable ways. We align our teaching with their critical pedagogies. These teachers do not indoctrinate, rather they give students the tools to struggle for a more just and equitable democracy. We recognize that the people who have banned their programs are led by a callow fear of difference and change. They call a curriculum "un-American" because it teaches students to locate their stories in the diversity of narratives that make up our country's history. According to their perverse doctrine, students who think differently are students who hate. We, however, have a very different view of our nation's youth. Our pedagogy reclaims the term "American"—there is nothing patriotic about willful ignorance—and honors the on-going struggle of the Raza Studies programs in Arizona. These critical teachers and students have fought a long and tiring battle against racist politicians and corporate bureaucrats that hide behind post-race rhetoric as a way of maintaining their social position. To the Arizona teachers: Our pedagogy aims at raising immediate consciousness about your predicament. We are in solidarity with your cause. We pledge our support. Your dream has not failed. It pushes us onward.

15. When pushed into teaching in uncritical programs, we will teach their "depoliticized" material in critical ways. Our capacity to teach students to think critically is not dependent upon the texts that we teach, but rather the questions that we pose. When teaching canonical texts in traditional programs, we will push students to recognize the class, race, gender and sexual biases in ostensibly "objective" and "apolitical" forms of knowledge. We recognize that casting certain types of knowledge as "not political" or "objective" is itself a deeply political act; those who make this claim actually reaffirm one of the founding myths of a corporate education—that knowledge can be produced in a vacuum, and that all students have equal, objective access to the same ways of knowing. While critical programs provide crucial spaces for openly deconstructing this myth, these discussions can and will occur outside these programs. Our pedagogical practices disrupt and challenge the logic of the corporate educational model by making crucial connections between the material that we teach and the structures of power that shape them.

16. We will push back against lecturers and programs that have invested in the oppressive corporate regime. When we are placed in assistant roles to elitist instructors within the university, we will operate in ways that undermine their dangerous and damaging lectures. Unlike these teachers, we will not assist in the perpetuation of an inequitable social order. We will not be the tools of the ruling class. We will teach students to unlearn the racist, classist, sexist, or homophobic ideologies that have bombarded them for the first decades of their lives. Along these same lines, many programs falsely claim to serve critical purposes. In practice, they reproduce the very hierarchies that they are supposed to critique. We will not be faithful to programs that are not faithful to themselves. Rather than criticizing these programs from the outside, we will infiltrate these programs and invest the time and energy necessary to bring critical educators into leadership and faculty positions. In strategically covert (and sometimes overt) ways, we will work against directors who impose on students a curriculum that amounts to little more than training for the corporate world. While we would prefer to work with such directors to develop critical curricula, in many cases directors are more concerned with retaining their privileged position in the university than addressing the potential consequences of their corporate pedagogical models. When directors and administrators consistently prevent real, concrete change in order to protect their personal interests, we will organize to bring about their removal. This, however, is a last resort. We do not enjoy scorched earth tactics. Nevertheless, we recognize the necessity of burning a barren field in order to sow the seeds of intellectual liberation. Ours is not a pedagogy of good intentions; ours is a pedagogy of concrete action. Our labor will not be acknowledged in a line on our CV or through institutional accolades; the only true record of our efforts will be written in our hearts and in our students' praxis. We recognize that the time and energy we spend revitalizing these programs will not change the system overnight. We plant the seeds of change and work for the conditions that will allow that change to flourish.

17. We will ally ourselves with truly critical educators inside and outside the university. We will form underground coalitions and networks with young people who have taken up common cause in different universities. We will support one another and work to destabilize institutional power structures. After we graduate, we will maintain contact with instructors and students still actively undermining the UC system from within, thus creating a national and potentially global network of allies.

18. We will break the walls that separate the ivory tower from our communities. A true education empowers marginalized groups to recognize and tear down the social structures underlying their exploitation. This is why the privileged seek to exclude minorities and working-class students from the university, and this is why we seek to restructure the university in ways that emphasize connections between spaces of learning and spaces of struggle. With that goal in mind, we will steal knowledge from the colonized academy and circulate it back to our students and members of the community in ways that effect practical change. This process will not dull down the theoretical tools we gain from academia; rather, it will make them sharper. Participating in active resistance movements provides unique insights and analytical tools that academia cannot and should not ignore. Although we reject any attempt to completely isolate the two, we also reject any attempt by academics to appropriate or speak for the communities and experiences where that knowledge derives. We can only achieve our goals by sharing our knowledge and strategies of resistance with potential allies beyond the university. At the same time, we acknowledge that we have everything to gain from community-based theories, practices, and activism enacted by people outside the university, including our most marginalized brothers and sister who push back against injustice on a day-to-day basis.

19. We will use all the media, technology, and art at our disposal to make the university's hidden injustices visible. The university's power depends upon the invisibility of its domination. Whereas earlier oppressions relied on blatant tactics of terror—lynching, imprisonment, militarized crowd control—the present administrative regime employs covert corporate methods to consolidate its power over the student body, faculty and staff. These methods include denying educational access and employment to marginalized groups, channeling funding into disciplines that reflect the interests of the 1% at the expense of disciplines that address racial, class, gender and sexual issues, and manipulating legal authorities to criminalize intellectual freedom. This university is corrupt and we will use the technologies at our disposal to document and publicize its offenses. By making its trespasses known, we will hold the university accountable to the public.

20. At times, we will remain anonymous. When necessary, we will wear our masks. We have no interest in becoming political martyrs or symbols of resistance. We see no use in being fired from teaching positions that already exploit our labor. Our goal is to enact pedagogies that will transform our students and our society. In turn, the process will transform us. The most effective way to do so is by undermining the system from within. The university depends upon our labor to perform an image of inclusivity and tolerance to mask the underlying corruption and exploitation at the heart of the system, but by applying our labor in subversive ways we will open up cracks in this exploitative, exclusionary system whenever and wherever possible. By making enough cracks, we will bring down the façade and begin building a truly inclusive and liberatory university.

21. We invoke imagination as a crucial site of resistance. Our pedagogy is fundamentally constructive. Instead of the disciplinary and prescriptive educational models that often dominate our universities, our classrooms foster creativity, collaboration and hope. By teaching our students to recognize the forms of domination that limit their present, we provide our students with the tools to imagine and create radically different futures. In and through these acts of creative resistance, our students open up new horizons of possibility and enact a politics of hope that both resists and acknowledges present conditions.

22. Our pedagogy is adaptive and inclusive. We realize that in order to be strategic, these principles must continually adjust and readjust to a system that sees our pedagogy as misguided and untimely. As budget cuts decimate the number of administrators and managers employed by the university, crucial cracks in the university's surveillance and disciplinary apparatus are produced. We will look for, and exploit, every crack and fissure in the walls of the university. The administration will try to fragment us, but we will continually adapt our methods to the changing institutional landscape. We also recognize that in order to be inclusive we cannot assume that that these principles speak for everyone. We only hope that our first attempts at outlining our dreams will speak to your own. To this end, we invite educators working in institutions across the country to join us in enacting and adapting these principles.

We affirm these principles as **THE PEDAGOGY FOR OUR FUTURE**, principles we enact each day henceforward. These principles mark a beginning not an end. They guide our moves in and beyond the classroom. They are marked with the radical power of love—love of family, love of our students, and love of our communities. Our love is expressed through concrete actions rather than abstract self-sacrifice, and for that reason it will be cast by some as militant or divisive. We are guided by our commitment to real people. Our success is not measurable within current educational standards. We do not seek recognition or rewards in our lifetime. Our daily struggles are fed not by grants or by evaluations but by the energy of students, our allies, and those who have been barred from entry. In practical and theoretical ways, they sustain us in our most important struggle within the academy.

In articulating these principles, we have relied on the future tense. This tense is the grammar of our dreams. Yet, in this pedagogical revolution what “will be” is tied back to what “was” and what “could have been” if conditions had been different. Our struggles for the future connect to those lost lives and histories that cannot be redeemed in our fight. Our dreams are haunted by the exploited and marginalized dead, some of whom are our partners, brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, grandfathers, grandmothers, and other non-blood kin that the system has made unmentionable. Their ghosts drive us toward the future.

The future tense is the grammar of our dreams. Yet, the dream of the future also structures our present praxis: We are sustained by the possibility of another university, which unlike a mirage or beacon in the distance, flickers into reality in the space we teach in and take back every day.

Our dreams are the continuation of multiple, intersecting histories of resistance. These histories are most easily locatable in the recorded words and deeds of radical educators such as Emma Goldman, César Chávez, Comandante Ramona, Dolores Huerta, Paulo Freire, Jaime Escalante, Angela Davis, Yuri Kochiyama and Gloria Anzaldúa, but our struggle is more closely aligned with those whose names and stories will never be found in any archive. In the decades-long battle for the public university, we see ourselves as the kin of those unrecognized students, teachers, and mentors who have fought long and hard struggles for a liberatory education. Their fire was never lost, even in apparent moments of defeat—it still burns and crackles in our dreams and guides us in our waking lives.

Our mad-dreams arise like wisps of smoke: We dream of a university where the means of knowledge production are restored to the people. We dream of a public good given back to the public. Our errant dreams and deeds will take back the university. Our dreams will steal into the peaceful sleep of those administrators and bureaucrats who currently occupy the seat of control. We, the ones they have pushed below, will become their nightmares. And, just like a nightmare, our names and faces will disappear as soon as they awake.

There is smoke on the horizon, signals that some have mistaken as chaos. Do not be mistaken. The global occupations are the signs that we, who have always been here, are emerging with new force. We—the people of color, the exploited whites, the queers and those with radically different abilities—have emerged onto the stage of history. We, the youth, will carry the fire.

Will you dream these dreams with us? Will you carry this fire with us?

If so, look for us to the bottom and left of the university—the space of dreams and the space where revolutionary pedagogy begins. We will find each other there in due time. We will find our voice there. There, in the space of the heart, we will shout our call and hear those words amplified back to us:

THEY STOLE OUR DREAMS! WE WANT THEM BACK!

THEY STOLE OUR FUTURE! WE TAKE IT BACK!

In solidarity and hope,
The University Liberation Front